

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 10560 262254Z
ACTION OES-07

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4982

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 10560

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SPOP IN
SUBJECT: MAHARASHTRA STATE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO CALCUTTA MADRAS
FROM BOMBAY JUL 21 IS REPEATED

QUOTE
UNCLAS BOMBAY 1731

E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SPOP
SUBJ: MAHARASHTRA FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IN THE DOLDRUMS

REF : BOMBAY 082

1. FOLLOWING THE MARCH 1977 CHANGE IN NEW DELHI ADMINIST-
RATION THE FAMILY PLANNING CAMPAIGN RECEIVED SERIOUS JOLT
ALL OVER INDIA; MAHARASHTRA IS NO EXCEPTION. MAHARASHTRA
HAD THE MOST PERSUASIVE CAMPAIGN IN THE COUNTRY. THERE
WERE 600,000 STERILIZATIONS IN THE STATE IN 1975-76 (LATEST
DATA AVAILABLE). THE INFRASTRUCTURE IS PRETTY MUCH IN
PLACE AND THE COERCION COMMON ELSEWHERE ARE MINIMAL TO
NON-EXISTENT HERE. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE CURRENT "DO NOTHING"
MOOD RELATING TO FAMILY PLANNING, IT LOOKS DOUBTFUL
WHETHER IT WILL HIT THE 400,000 STERILIZATION TARGET ALLO-
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TTED BY THE GOI FOR 1977-79.

2. ACCORDING DATA PRINTED RECENTLY IN THE INDIAN EXPRESS,
AGAINST THE PREVIOUS STERILIZATION RATE RANGING FROM
50,000 TO 100,000 PER MONTH, ONLY SOME 30,000 WERE
PERFORMED IN MARCH, DROPPING TO 9,000 IN APRIL. IN GREATER

BOMBAY ONLY 3,000 STERILIZATIONS WERE PERFORMED IN APRIL AGAINST THE PRE-ELECTORAL AVERAGE OF 8,000 PER MONTH. NOT ONLY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STERILIZATION HAS CONSIDERABLY GONE DOWN BUT MOST OF THESE STERILIZATIONS WERE TUBECTOMIES BRINGING DOWN THE NORMAL VASECTOMY-TUBECTOMY RATIO OF 60:40 IN MAHARASHTRA TO 75:25 AS AMONG 9,000 STERILIZATIONS IN APRIL ONLY 2,200 WERE VASECTOMY.

3. THE DROP IN THE STERILIZATION RATE HAS BEEN SO GREAT THAT THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF GOM (PRINCIPAL ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY FOR POPULATION CONTROL) HAS RETURNED SOME RS.4 MILLION EARMARKED FOR INCENTIVE PAYMENTS TO THE STATE TREASURY.

4. SOME LEADING INDIAN DEMOGRAPHERS HAVE NOW OPENLY COME OUT CRITICIZING THE ELEMENT OF "INCENTIVES" IN THE FAMILY PLANNING CAMPAIGN. DR. V.M. DANDEKAR, RESPECTED DIRECTOR OF GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICS, POONA, BITTERLY RESENTED THE MONETARY INCENTIVES TO THE POOR. WHILE DELIVERING THE RECENT CONVOCATION ADDRESS AT THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF POPULATION CONTROL IN BOMBAY, HE ASSERTED, "SUCH INCENTIVES AMOUNT TO TAKING UNDUE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR POVERTY. IT IS ALSO COERCION OF A DIFFERENT KIND. IT IS IMMORAL AND UNETHICAL." THIS COULD BE A REFLECTION OF THE CHANGING MOOD OF THE INDIAN INTELLIGENTSIA TOWARD THE POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAM.
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5. BESIDES STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE ELEMENTS OF COMPULSION AND INCENTIVES THE CONCEPT OF FIXING THE STERILIZATION TARGETS IS ALSO UNDER SEVERE CRITICISM. THE MAHARASHTRA MUSLIM LEAGUE WORKING COMMITTEE HAS PASSED A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING SERIOUS CONCERN AND ANXIETY OVER GOI'S DECISION TO FIX THE STERILIZATION TARGETS FOR VARIOUS STATES EVEN THOUGH STERILIZATION WOULD BE VOLUNTARY. THE COMMITTEE'S POSITION IS THAT FULFILLING A TARGET WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO PRESSURES AND COERCION.

6. APART FROM STATE ADMINISTRATION LOWERING DOWN ITS EFFORTS TOWARD POPULATION CONTROL A LARGE NUMBER OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES LIKE THE ROTARY, THE LIONS AND GIANTS CLUBS HAVE LOST THEIR EARLIER ENTHUSIASM ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING. OF LATE, NOT A WORD IS HEARD ABOUT THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN THIS FIELD. ROSENTHAL

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